

The President and His Majesty also reiterated their mutual commitment to advance the rule of law and to promote respect for human rights, including freedom of religion, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and cherished by

the people of both the United States and Brunei Darussalam.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at the White House Children's Story Hour December 17, 2002

Students. Merry Christmas.

The President. Thank you. Third graders?

Students. Yes.

The President. Good. Where's your teachers? Thank you for teaching. Welcome. We're glad you're here. This is the Roosevelt Room in the White House.

The First Lady. And this painting behind us is Teddy Roosevelt, up above.

The President. He was one of our Presidents.

The First Lady. He was one of our Presidents 100 years ago—100 years ago.

The President. Where's Burnie Elementary? Welcome.

Saint Agnes? Glad you all are here. Thanks for coming.

Laura and I thought we'd read a Christmas story to you, if that's okay.

Students. Yes.

The President. Glad you accepted it. [Laughter] That's what's going to happen. Have you heard the one that starts with, "'Twas the night before Christmas"?

Students. Yes.

The President. And what comes next?

Students. I can't see it.

The President. Oh, I'm sorry. "'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house"——

The First Lady. "Not a creature was stirring"——

The President. ——"not even a mouse."

The First Lady. Mouse.

The President. Nobody was stirring. It was kind of quiet, wasn't it?

You had better read that, because I can't see it.

The First Lady. [Laughter] "The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, in hopes that Saint Nicholas soon would be there. The children were nestled all snug in their beds." Don't they look snug?

Students. Yes.

The First Lady. "While visions of sugarplums danced in their heads." What does that mean? Do you know what sugarplums are?

Students. No.

The First Lady. Candy. So they're thinking maybe their stockings will have candy in them, don't they?

The President. You can't see? You come right over here.

The First Lady. "And Ma in her kerchief and I in my cap had just settled down for a long winter's nap." Do you all want to come up closer here?

The President. It may be easier to see.

The First Lady. Yes. Come on over here so you can see. These are really beautiful pictures, if you can see close.

"When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter, I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter. Away to the window I flew like a flash, tore open the shutters, threw up the sash. The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow gave a luster of midday to the objects below. When what to my wondering eyes should appear"—do you all know?

Students. Reindeer.

The First Lady. "A miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer."

The President. Yes.

The First Lady. "With a little old man so jolly and quick, I knew in a moment it must be"——

Students. Saint Nick.

The First Lady. ——"Saint Nick." Do you like these pictures?

Students. Yes.

The First Lady. "More rapid than eagles, the coursers they came, and he whistled and shouted and called them by name." Do you know the name of the reindeers? "Now Dasher, now Dancer, now Prancer and Vixen! On Comet, on Cupid, on Donner and Blitzen." See all these reindeer?

The President. Anybody in this room named Blitzen? [Laughter]

The First Lady. Do you all remember all these names? Dasher and Dancer and Comet and Cupid——

Student. And Rudolph.

The First Lady. And Rudolph. That's right.

The President. Right.

The First Lady. He's not in this story, though. He came later.

"To the top of the porch, to the top of the wall! Now, dash away, dash away, dash away all!

"As dry leaves before the wild hurricane fly, when they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky, so up to the housetop the coursers they flew, with a sleigh full of toys and Saint Nicholas, too."

This is pretty. You notice who is in every picture——well, not every one.

"And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof the prancing and pawing of each little hoof. As I drew in my head and was turning around, down the chimney he came with a bound.

"He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot. And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot. A bundle of toys he had flung on his back, and he

looked like a peddler just about to open his pack." See all those toys?

Students. Yes.

The First Lady. "His eyes, how they twinkled! His dimples, how merry! His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry. His droll little mouth was drawn up in a bow, and the beard on his chin was as white as the snow." Is this what we all think Santa Claus looks like?

Students. Yes.

The First Lady. With a white beard?

Students. Yes.

The First Lady. And a nose like a cherry?

"The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth, and the smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath. He had a broad face and a round little belly that shook when he laughed like a bowl full of jelly. He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf, and I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself. A wink of his eye and a twist of his head soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread."

The President. Pretty exciting so far, isn't it? [Laughter]

The First Lady. "He spoke not a word but went straight to work and filled all the stockings, and then he turned with a jerk." And what's he going to do now? How's he going to get out? Back up the chimney, isn't he?

"And laying his finger aside of his nose and giving a nod, up the chimney he rose."

The President. That's kind of hard to do. [Laughter] Have you ever tried to crawl up your chimney?

Students. No.

The First Lady. "He sprang to his sleigh and to his team gave a whistle. And away they all flew like the down of a thistle. But I heard him exclaim as he went out of sight"—what did he exclaim? Do you remember the very end of this? Do you? What?

Student. Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night.

The President. Very good.

The First Lady. That's right. Exactly.

The President. Very good.

The First Lady. "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night."

The President. And that's what we want to say to you all: Merry Christmas.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Statement Announcing a National Missile Defense Initiative December 17, 2002

When I came to office, I made a commitment to transform America's national security strategy and defense capabilities to meet the threats of the 21st century. Today I am pleased to announce that we will take another important step in countering these threats by beginning to field missile defense capabilities to protect the United States as well as our friends and allies. These initial capabilities emerge from our research and development program and build on the test bed that we have been constructing. While modest, these capabilities will add to America's security and serve as a starting point for improved and expanded capabilities later, as further progress is made in researching and developing missile defense technologies and in light of changes in the threat.

September 11, 2001, underscored that our Nation faces unprecedented threats, in a world that has changed greatly since the cold war. To better protect our country against the threats of today and tomorrow, my administration has developed a new national security strategy and new supporting strategies for making our homeland more secure and for combating weapons of mass destruction. Throughout my administration, I have made clear that the United States will take every necessary measure to protect our citizens against what is perhaps the gravest danger of all: the catastrophic harm that may result from hostile states or terrorist groups armed with weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them.

Missile defenses have an important role to play in this effort. The United States has moved beyond the doctrine of cold war deterrence reflected in the 1972 ABM Treaty. At the same time, we have established a positive relationship with Russia that includes partnership in counterterrorism and in other key areas of mutual concern. We have adopted a new concept of deterrence that recognizes that missile defenses will add to our ability to deter those who may contemplate attacking us with missiles. Our withdrawal from the ABM Treaty has made it possible to develop and test the full range of missile defense technologies and to deploy defenses capable of protecting our territory and our cities.

I have directed the Secretary of Defense to proceed with fielding an initial set of missile defense capabilities. We plan to begin operating these initial capabilities in 2004 and 2005, and they will include ground-based interceptors, sea-based interceptors, additional Patriot (PAC-3) units, and sensors based on land, at sea, and in space.

Because the threats of the 21st century also endanger our friends and allies around the world, it is essential that we work together to defend against them. The Defense Department will develop and deploy missile defenses capable of protecting not only the United States and our deployed forces but also our friends and allies. The United States will also structure our missile